

Bettina Renz, *Russia's Military Revival*. Polity, 2018.

The annexation of Crimea in 2014 and Russia's military operation in Syria in 2015 took most countries by surprise. Foreign policy aspects aside, it was Russia's new military capabilities that captured the attention of Russia experts around the world. Both campaigns demonstrated Russia's improved command, inter-service coordination, and the use of cutting-edge technologies and hybrid warfare. Most importantly, they showed Russia's new capacity to run military operations far beyond its immediate neighborhood with an unprecedented confidence. Observers noted a stark difference from past clumsy military campaigns based on excessive violence with outdated technologies under the command of ageing military command in the '90s and early 2000s. Russia's "shiny new military power" sparked a combination of excitement, fear, and subsequent calls to increase Western military capacity to counteract Russia's potential threat to the West. This book offers a different narrative as it goes beyond excitement and fear and explores the intricate combination of historical, political, and economic factors that have shaped Russia's military reform and its current strategy.

Bettina Renz skilfully builds the puzzle of Russia's military reform through historical, political, and foreign policy analysis, and argues that Russia's modernized military does not necessarily rival the Western military capabilities. Renz places the Russian military reform into a much-needed context and explores five aspects of military power.

In the first chapter, Renz discusses the role of military power in Russia's foreign policy through its history. Analyzing such factors as great power status, sovereignty, Russia's imperialism and its legacy, and multilateralism, the author explains how and why a strong military constitutes an integral part of Russia's self-perception as a great power.

The second chapter walks the reader through Russia's painful struggle to transform the disintegrating Soviet military might into a modern force. Despite the apparent neglect of the armed forces in the immediate post-Soviet period, the modernization plans have

always been in place. The improved economic position has simply put these plans into action.

The third chapter maps Russia's force architecture, which includes police, emergency situation services, security services, and the National Guard. Renz rightfully notes that Russia's unique system of force structures is often overlooked and misinterpreted by external observers while it offers important insights into Russia's strategic planning and operations, as well as better understanding of how regime stability and national security function.

After a captivating discussion of historical, political and structural context of Russia's military, Renz examines the cases when Russia used military power in the past thirty years. These include immediate post-Soviet peacekeeping operations in the former USSR, involvement in multilateral peacekeeping operations in the Balkans, the war in Georgia in 2008, the Crimean campaign in 2014, and Syrian airstrikes in 2015. The annexation of Crimea and Russian military campaign in Syria represent interesting case studies to explore Russia's most recent use of the reformed military capabilities means to enforce its foreign policy objectives and consolidate itself as a force to be reckoned with. This historical perspective with a solid foreign policy analysis offers the reader an opportunity to trace the evolution of military capacity and strategic thought in Russia throughout its post-Soviet period.

Finally, the last chapter provides an in-depth analysis of Russian military thinking and deconstructs the notion of Russian hybrid warfare. Renz argues that Russia's capacity to successfully apply hybrid warfare is overestimated and can be misleading. Despite some impressive achievements in the recent military campaigns, Russian military success is due to a combination of various factors, including simple luck, rather than thanks to its skilful use of hybrid warfare.

This book presents a fascinating exploration of Russia's military revival through an expert analysis of Russia's deep-rooted perceptions of power, sovereignty, and security. It examines the timing, reasons, prospects, and limitations of Russia's military revival, and places the military into a larger context of foreign policy, national security, and Russian leadership's strategic thinking. This research

would be of interest to both academics and policy makers working on Russia as a foreign policy actor.

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Marlene Laruelle (ed.), *The Nazarbayev Generation: Youth in Kazakhstan*. Lexington Books, 2019.

The book is devoted to the youth's perspective on the current situation in the post-Soviet Republic of Kazakhstan. The authors of the volume used Habermas, Bourdieu, and Levi-Strauss's concepts to describe young people's opinions on nationalism, globalization, activism, value orientations, etc. The book challenges the top-down approach to the study of Kazakhstan's society and the widespread focus on state policies and regime narratives. The methodological approaches vary from sociological surveys through document analysis, observations, qualitative interviews, or focus groups, to mixed-method research. This methodological focus allows the book to distance itself from the official rhetoric and reveal the grassroots opinions of the general public, which is the main goal of the volume.

The book consists of four parts illustrating young people's attitudes towards such concepts as national identity, changes in moral standards, globalization, and activism. Although it touches upon other fields of social and political life, the analysis of the book moves around the issues of national identity and nationalism. Therefore, it falls into the category of constructivism, considering national identity as a social creation.

The first part of the book is devoted to the young generation's understanding of national identity. Azamat and Barbara Junisbai argue that people aged 18–29 are more egalitarian and in favor of liberalism, and more tolerant of economic inequality, nepotism, and family rule due to their socialization in such conditions. These factors influence young people's understanding of national identity. Aziz Burkhanov, comparing the results of 2005 and 2016 surveys, notes that there has been “a shift toward a more civic understanding